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AGO ltr 11 Jun 1980 ; AGO ltr 11 Jun 1980

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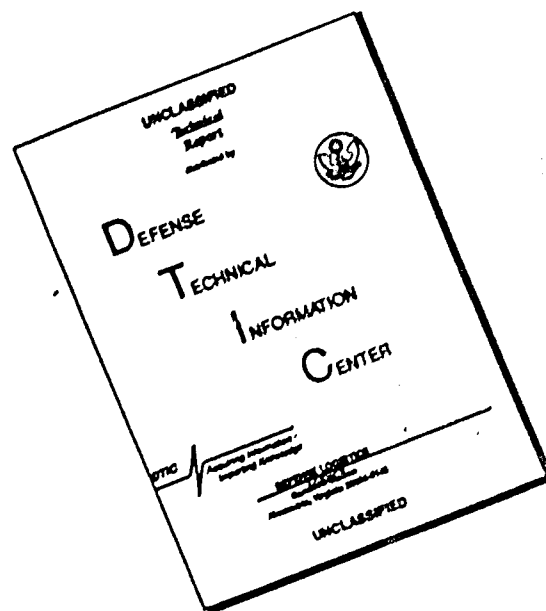
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310



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12 32 p.
11 18 August 1971

AGDA-A (M) (28 Jul 71) FOR OT-UT-71B028

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: MG Charles P. Brown
CG, I Field Force Vietnam, CG, Second Regional Assistance
Command, Period 31 March 1970 thru 15 May 1971 (U)

"THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECTING THE NATIONAL
DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE
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1. Reference: AR 1-26, subject, Senior Officer Debriefing Program (U) dated 4 November 1966.
2. Transmitted herewith is the report of MG Charles P. Brown, subject as above.
3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized from the experiences of the author. The report should be reviewed in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5, AR 1-26; however, it should not be interpreted as the official view of the Department of the Army, or of any agency of the Department of the Army.
4. Information of actions initiated under provisions of AR 1-26, as a result of subject report should be provided to the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, ATTN: FOR OT UT within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.

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Verne L. Bowers
VERNE L. BOWERS
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96375

AVHDO-DO

JUL 1971

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report -
MG Charles P. Brown

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army
Washington, D. C. 20310

1. Inclosed are three copies of the Senior Officer Debriefing Report prepared by MG Charles P. Brown. This report covers the period 31 March 1970 thru 15 May 1971 during which time MG Brown served as Deputy Commanding General; Commanding General, I Field Force Vietnam and as Commanding General, Second Regional Assistance Command.

2. MG Brown is recommended as a guest speaker at appropriate service schools or joint colleges.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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2 cy w/d HQ DA

[Signature]
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, Second Regional Assistance Command
APO San Francisco 96350

AVFA-CG


14 May 1971

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report (RCS-CSFOR-74) (U)

Commanding General
US Army Vietnam
ATTN: AVHGC-DST
APO San Francisco 96375

1. Reference: USARV Reg 1-3.
2. Forwarded in accordance with reference are five copies of the debrief report. This report varies from prescribed format in an effort to make it more applicable to situation prevailing in 1971.

1 Incl
Debrief Report, 5 cy


CHARLES P. BROWN
Major General, USA
Commanding

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Country: Republic of Vietnam

Debrief Report By: Charles P. Brown, Major General, USA

Duty Assignments: a. Deputy Commanding General, I Field Force Vietnam
b. Commanding General, I Field Force Force Vietnam
c. Commanding General, Second Regional Assistance Command

Inclusive Dates: a. 31 March 1970 - 8 January 1971
b. 9 January 1971 - 30 April 1971
c. 30 April 1971 - 15 May 1971

Date of Report: 14 May 1971

1. (C) GENERAL:

a. This report reflects my personal assessment of conditions in Military Region 2 and is based upon my service of nearly fourteen months in the region.

b. While failures continue to mar the scene here (failures frequently magnified by a tendency to focus too heavily upon them) as they do elsewhere in Vietnam, there also is considerable basis for confidence. While this is apparent when one compares the situation now with the situation one year ago, it is obvious if, simultaneously one considers where we are in terms of what has been withdrawn.

c. When I came here in March 1970, US maneuver forces included the 4th Infantry Division, the 173d Airborne Brigade, and TF South (a multi-battalion force operating primarily in Binh Thuan Province). Now only the 173d Airborne Brigade plus two separate battalions (1/22d Infantry and the 1/10th Cavalry) and Company C, 75th Infantry (Rangers) remain. The loss of TF South is assessed as not being particularly great, primary reason being that the 44th ARVN Regiment has done an excellent job; also because the Binh Thuan Province Chief, COL Nghia, has performed well and has done much good work in improving the effectiveness of the RF/PF in that province. The 4th Division, however, is another matter, for the operations of the 4th Division made a significant impact not only in the areas in which its operations took place, but also in regions and bases far removed from those areas. Thus operations in BA 202 and in the area south of An Khe interdicted the enemy LOC from BA

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202 to BA 236, and thus impaired enemy capability in the latter. Likewise to the north of QL-19, operations against the major NW - SE LOC, in the Song Con River Valley north of HARDTIMES (BR 6262), and in the An Lao River Valley north of BA 226, all operated to degrade the operational capability of enemy forces in that base area. Moreover, 4th Division units frequently operated in BA 226 itself over extended periods of time. The effect of all these operations was that there was considerably less enemy activity in the populated lowlands of northeastern Binh Dinh than presently is the case. But in spite of these losses of US maneuver capability, in spite of the difficulties in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen, in spite of the fact that hamlet chiefs continue to be murdered and compounds continue to be overrun, I see the overall situation in the military region as having improved. And so there is a basis for some optimism, but this optimism must be tempered by an assessment of just how much the Vietnamese can be expected to do when they are relatively more alone and on their own. *IS DISCUSSED*

d. In succeeding paragraphs, I will discuss subjects that relate to this assessment from different angles, and in addition will address other topics appropriate for a report of this type.

2. (C) GENERAL MILITARY OPERATIONS:

a. One general observation is that we really have yet to become successful in combined operations. There have been ARVN and US operations, and there have been US and ROK operations, but the combined nature of these operations has never been more than superficial. The "AO" concept has led the various national forces to operate perhaps more independently than should be the case or than should have been permitted to develop. Truly combined operations centers have not been achieved. The information gathering and intelligence production process has been characterized more by separatism and relatively little cross-fertilization or timely sharing of information. Finally, the command aspects of combined operations have never been successfully addressed. These problems have, of course, been greater in this MR than in others because the forces of three nations have been stationed in MR 2 since the earliest days of the build-up.

b. The need for combined operations is clear, for only in this way can maximum pressure be brought to bear on the enemy. Only combined operations permit maximum exploitation of intelligence and maximum application of the principles of mass and economy of force. Thus what this failure has cost (and this may be true throughout Vietnam from the very beginning) is that forces and firepower available have not been used with maximum efficiency - available combat power has been wasted.

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c. As for the future of combined operations in MR 2, I see no hope with respect to the ROK and the ARVN. Not only is there the language barrier, but also the ROK's frankly are distrustful of the ARVN. They believe (not without justification) that planning done with the ARVN has impossible security implications. They believe (and I concur in this view) that planning information revealed to the ARVN is certain to be leaked to the enemy, if not by informers then inadvertently by atrocious COMSEC. In addition, the ROK's look only to their own "AO." They are not particularly interested in venturing out of it, as is well demonstrated by the long term delay (December 1970 - April 1971) that preceded their eventual recent entry into BA 226.

d. As for combined operations between US and ARVN elements, for all practical purposes the opportunity for this is over simply because US maneuver forces in MR 2 soon will be out of business.

e. What can and must be done is that the ARVN and the territorial forces must learn to work together in truly combined operations. In this regard, the US advisory effort must work continually for closer relationships between these two forces. Unfortunately, the US advisory effort is divided at the working level between CORDS and MACV advisors. In other words, the US perpetuates the same division which exists between ARVN and territorial forces. It is an unfortunate fact that although the CORDS and MACV advisors are subordinate to the US regional Commanding General, a gap clearly exists and there are conflicts of interest. For example, because of the different attitudes, interests, and chains of command, it is extremely difficult to collocate MACV and CORDS advisors. Although an integration of CORDS and MACV advisors probably would lead to a closer relationship between ARVN and territorial forces, the chance for this to occur appears slim indeed. For this reason, there is merit in the previous system in which the province chief had a military (MACV) advisor who answered to the ARVN division senior advisor and a civilian advisor (USAID) who answered to the embassy.

3. (S-NF) ARVN OPERATIONS:

a. During my fourteen months, the battle at Dak Seang in 1970 and at Firebase 6 in 1971 stand out as the major ARVN battles. Because it is more recent, I will concentrate on the latter. Nothing will be lost by so doing because shortcomings that existed at Dak Seang also were present at Firebase 6 (although perhaps to a lesser degree in several instances).

b. To begin with a positive observation, it should be noted that the battle for Firebase 6 developed from an ARVN II Corps reconnaissance

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in force operation in the Plei Trap Valley just east of Base Area 609 in late February--early March 1971. As far as the reconnaissance in force operation was concerned, it was a complete success--the enemy was discovered in strength. From that point forward, however, the enemy clearly seized and maintained the upper hand. Two ARVN battalions were attacked and totally fragmented. What is positive about all this is the fact that the ARVN were out in the Plei Trap--Base Area 609 area at all, and that while there they were fighting the best regular enemy regiments in the military region. This would have been out of the question not too long ago.

c. Thus the battle for Firebase 6 was set, and it proceeded in a manner which is already familiar. From this battle, from the heavy fighting that occurred around Phu Nhon District Headquarters at the same time, and from other operations I have observed the ARVN execute over the past fourteen months, the following points clearly emerge.

(1) Control of Regimental and Larger Operations Against NVA Units: The ARVN senior commanders in the military region have exhibited an inability to establish (on a routine basis) firm and logical chain of command arrangements when operations are large and forces involve units from several organizations. With respect to chain of command, the Plei Trap and Phu Nhon operations were at times impossible. There simply appeared to be no one in charge. Against this standard, command arrangements during the Firebase 6 operation improved, but they still left much to be desired on more than one occasion. Clearly there is a tendency to fragment command and control, and thus one often has the impression that too many are running things and at the same time not enough.

(2) Planning: Part of the problem with planning is the lack of it. The other part is that that planning which is done often is not done well and often is late in terms of lead time needed for proper execution. To illustrate the lack of it, ARVN II Corps has neither a campaign nor a seasonal plan. Repeated efforts to interest them in doing planning of this type have failed. Apparently General Dzu and his staff simply are not interested, or at least General Dzu is not interested. To illustrate that it is not done well, one only has to observe the rapidity with which "plans" change, and the often spastic nature of these changes. How many times have I left Headquarters, II Corps, or a field CP satisfied with the plan which had been explained to me only to learn the following morning that the plan had been altered, cancelled, or botched--and more often than not for no good reason. Thus there is an increment of instability--response to whims and often to low quality information--in all ARVN planning.

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Another consistent planning shortfall is the failure to take fire and maneuver into account in a proper way. And there is a particular shortfall in fire support planning. Indirect fires simply are not, on average, planned to precede the movement of attacking ground forces, to roll forward to permit the advance, or to protect the flanks in dangerous areas along the route. This is a significant fault, and of course has serious implications in terms of casualties. In the Firebase 6 operation, in all fairness, it should be made clear that the fire support planners had a special problem. There was no real operational plan, hence there was no clear-cut need for a fire support plan--and even if there had been demand for one, there would have been nothing substantial on which to base it.

(3) Coordination: In all three battles, coordination of aviation, artillery, and TAC air left much to be desired. Apparently, this also was a problem in the Lam Son operation. There simply is a demonstrated lack of capacity to orchestrate all the elements of fire support and aviation available.

(4) Flexibility: To the full credit of General Dzu, when Firebase 6 bloomed, he reacted. There was no hesitancy to move forces from other areas in the military region directly to the scene of action. Not all units moved fought well on arrival, but at least they moved, and in general did it well. As the battle wore on, however, there was a tendency to move too much (to give the appearance of being an end in itself), and thus quickly became too much of a good thing.

The central observation would seem to be that the initial reaction to large enemy activity is usually rapid movement of friendly battalions to the vicinity of the battle area without developing an accompanying scheme of maneuver, chain of command, or fire support plan. Troops are thrown in, then adjustments are made later. Decisions are not made sufficiently in advance to allow proper fire support planning in detail, and when made, are later changed without proper notification to all concerned.

(5) Strength: Part of the problem is too few troops to fight. The Firebase 6 figures tabulated below illustrate the point. Forward foxhole strength in several battalions, as indicated in the right hand column, was absurd.

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<u>BN</u>	<u>AUTHORIZED</u>	<u>ASSIGNED</u>	<u>PRESENT FOR DUTY</u>	<u>ADVISORS' ESTIMATE OF TROOPS IN THE FIELD</u>
11 Rgr	655	524	354	
22 Rgr	655	520	422	
23 Rgr	655	569	364	
1/41	665	484	394	160
2/41	665	486	425	200
3/41	665	470	413	150
4/41	665	463	398	60
1/42	665	720	623	
2/42	665	398	327	
3/42	665	429	308	
4/42	665	394	219	
1/47	665	440	409	
2/47	665	505	313	
3/47	665	497	453	
3/44	665	410	332	
4/44	665	605	350	450 (Est strength of 44th Regt in forward area)

(6) Leadership:

(a) Senior Commanders:

1. Commanding General, II Corps, Major General Dzu, is considered to be extremely capable and a good leader, but he tends to assume that his orders are always carried out when in fact, in many cases, they are not. He is receptive to recommendations and advice when in trouble, less so otherwise. He is impulsive and tends to move forces about to an excessive degree. In addition, he tends to rely too heavily on gunships and B-52 strikes as opposed to artillery and mortar fire in conjunction with maneuver. On the other hand, he gets around the military region and has considerable drive. Finally, he has exhibited a willingness to commit forces against good NVA units and has demonstrated the capability to stand steadfast in the face of high casualties.

2. Commanding General, 22d Division, Major General Trien, lacks force and endurance and is prone to fatigue. He is a whiner, always looking for excuses. The deputy commander is the driving force within the division. Major General Trien accepts repeated failings of subordinates without corrective action, a failing that permeates the officer corps within the division. Officers are pessimistic and expect the worst when facing NVA units.

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3. Commanding General, 23d Division, Brigadier General Canh, is considered to be a relatively strong leader, however, because he has not been tested in large scale operations against the best NVA regiments, it is difficult to assess his capabilities under the stress of sustained combat.

(b) Junior Leadership:

1. In general, leadership at the company and platoon level leaves much room for improvement. Often unit leaders are neither as technically nor tactically proficient in their jobs as we would hope, and just as often they fail to seek improvement. Often in an encounter with the enemy, the small unit leader fails aggressively to pursue once he has gained the advantage. Lack of proper supervision at all levels accounts in large part for tasks being performed haphazardly or in some cases not at all. Many of the shortcomings observed in second echelon leadership must be attributable to leadership faults in the higher echelons of command.

2. Some professional shortcomings: The following is a listing of professional shortcomings at the small unit level. These relate to leadership simply because job knowledge is a key factor in good leadership.

Inability to use artillery and mortars properly, or even to take them along in many instances.

Inability to get troops to fight.

Undependability (Does the patrol go where it is sent? Did the unit see what it reported? Is the unit where it is reported to be?).

Inability to get troops to dig in and stay awake (RF/PF particularly).

Inability to reduce desertion rates.

(7) OPSEC and COMSEC:

(a) II Corps/Military Region 2 does not have Tactical Secure Voice (TSV) equipment. Only a limited amount of such equipment has been approved for unilateral use by RNVAF and that is confined to the Vietnamese Navy and the Special Security Technical Branch, the latter comparable to our radio research units. (Approval for issue to above units was by MACV and JGS).

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(b) Secure communications equipment available to II Corps/Military Region 2 is limited to the KL 7 and M-209 cipher devices, neither of which is on-line. Only the M-209 is available for issue to sub-sector and to battalion level. This device requires detailed and laborious encoding and decoding. Cipher codes are disseminated for a 30 day period.

(c) ARVN operations are generally stereotyped. Planning, preparation for operations, and methods of conducting operations generally follow the same patterns. More importantly, reports from prisoners, hoi chanhs, and other highly classified sources show the enemy has penetrated Headquarters, II Corps, the 23d ARVN Division, and probably the 22d ARVN Division at operational planning levels.

(d) There is a lack of appreciation for communications security among some ARVN commanders. The corps commander is among the worst offenders. Emphasis is being placed on this through advisory channels but we can anticipate little improvement pending availability of more responsive secure communications.

(e) The combination of the above factors (unresponsive communications network; stereotyped operations; penetration of operational planning by enemy agents; and a lack of appreciation for COMSEC by ARVN commanders) can have a detrimental effect on the ability of the Vietnamese to hold their own against enemy forces.

d. Much of the preceding has been critical. As emphasized earlier, this is not to say there has not been improvement. There has, but there is a long way yet to go. I am heartened by the fact that Firebase 6 turned out to be a defeat of the enemy. Granting the decisive role played by the B-52's, the facts remain that the battle was a tremendous experience for all who participated. I am confident that an enormous amount of learning took place. Surely the victory can be translated into a good base of confidence at all levels. (Many battalions were meeting good, well-trained, regular NVA troops for the first time. Many of these battalions had fought well in their home districts against local and other type units, but to come up against the 66th and 28th NVA, this was a new ball game. Naturally it took some getting used to. An extremely encouraging note was the manner in which some battalions fought and held under extreme pressure.) There has to have been reflection by senior commanders on the operational technique of coordinating all forms of combat support. The intelligence system was thoroughly exercised. All of this will stand the ARVN in good stead in the future. I am confident that they will do better next time--and it is on this positive note that I will proceed to the next subject.

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4. (C) ASSESSMENT OF A TYPICAL MR 2 ARVN BATTALION:

a. Personnel:

(1) Strength: Authorized 665; average assigned 460; average present for duty 372.

(2) Replacements: Draftees are assigned by corps to each division for training. After training, individuals are assigned to regiments and then to battalions. Volunteers and "A" category conscripts may select unit of choice. Each regiment has a recruiting team which recruits for battalions within the regiment. Recruiting in highland provinces area is difficult due to sparse population.

(3) Morale: Typical battalion in highland provinces has special problems since most soldiers are recruited in the more populous coastal provinces. Subsequent assignment to the highlands increases soldier's cost of living and changes accustomed mode of living. Lack of sufficient family housing also continues to affect morale. Soldiers complain that fifteen days leave per year is inadequate. After a soldier has served two years in the highlands, he may request reassignment to an area of his choice, however, he cannot depart until his replacement has arrived.

(4) Desertions: Average desertion rate per ARVN regiment for March 1971 was 40 per 1,000 assigned. This average figure has fluctuated very little over the past six months.

b. Operations and Training:

(1) Combat effectiveness: There is such a wide variance between battalions that the term "typical" is meaningless. Battalions from flat, open coastal areas are considerably less effective when operating in rugged highlands terrain. Battalion combat effectiveness varies almost daily based on area of operations, length of operation, availability of combat support, nature and determination of enemy, and mental attitude of troops.

(2) Leadership: Capability and attitude of battalion and regimental commanders has a direct relationship to unit combat effectiveness. Leadership varies greatly between Military Region 2 units and ranks from outstanding to poor. The area which needs most improvement is the commander's concern for his men. Although the average battalion commander has many years of combat experience, the application of leadership principles varies greatly from commander to commander.

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(3) Behavior Under Fire: Behavior under fire is a direct reflection of leadership, morale, and training, hence there is a wide span of reactions to fire among the battalions. Battalions seem more aggressive in their home area of operation when operating against local force VC. Many battalions seem to have fear of meeting the NVA (a psychological barrier) and approach battle with a noticeable lack of confidence.

(4) Training: When the number of combat operations is taken into consideration, an acceptable amount of training is conducted at battalion level throughout Military Region 2. During the last six months Military Region 2 infantry battalions reported an average of three days training per month.

c. Logistics: In general, the ARVN infantry battalion is adequately equipped and supply effectiveness is good. Supply classes I, III, and V are generally available in sufficient quantity and most authorized class VII equipment items are normally on hand. Shortages occur primarily within classes II, IV, and IX including such items as clothing, barrier material, construction materials, and repair parts. Claymore mines often are in short supply. A continuing problem is ARVN unwillingness to follow up requisitions aggressively to the next higher supply echelon. Maintenance posture of typical ARVN infantry battalions is usually adequate; however, additional emphasis on operator maintenance is often required.

5. (C) TERRITORIAL FORCES:

RF/PF units in Military Region 2 are a mixed bag. Some units are consistently good. Many, particularly PF, are consistently poor. The majority would have to be categorized as mediocre. The same unit will fight like professionals one day, but break and run the next when their leader is killed. Explanations for these varied conditions abound, but when considered in sum, what emerges is the fact that territorial forces are beset with many serious problems which, when taken together, effectively preclude the regular and consistent progression of RF/PF into effective combat forces. A general discussion of the more serious of these problems follows.

a. The RF/PF are understrength in the line units. While RF support units, Sector Management and Direct Support Logistics (SM&DSL) Centers, intelligence units, mechanized platoons, and province and district headquarters are at or above full authorized strength, the RF companies and PF platoons are understrength, sometimes critically so.

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In Military Region 2 as of March 1971, RF rifle company assigned strength was 82.4% of authorized and PF platoon assigned strength was 93.2% of authorized. However, a more accurate picture is reflected in present for duty strengths, which are 73.3% of authorized for RF rifle companies and 87.6% of authorized for PF platoons. For the RF, this means there are 54,400 authorized, 41,600 assigned, and 37,00 present for duty, while for the PF there are 54,000 authorized, 49,000 assigned, and 46,000 present for duty. On-site inspections reveal that even these reported strengths are higher than a physical count produces. The problem is compounded by the numerous soldiers who are carried on the rolls but who have outside jobs in the village or hamlet and by which they augment their meager pay. This is especially true in PF units, where soldiers are paid agonizingly low salaries. RF companies of 50-70 men and PF platoons of 12-17 soldiers can be found throughout the region.

b. Mission assignments greatly influence the effectiveness of RF/PF units. Of the 410 RF companies in Military Region 2, 200 companies have missions of security of villages and hamlets while only 36 have a primary mission of conducting offensive operations. Clearly, the majority should be conducting operations, seeking out the enemy in the consolidation zones. These security missions generally amount to standing guard in compounds located in or near the hamlet/village for which the unit is providing security. Although these units are responsible periodically to conduct combat patrols and to establish ambushes nightly around the village or hamlet being secured, the low number of enemy contacts per 1,000 operations conducted demonstrates the relative ineffectiveness of these units and their operations. Almost half the companies in Military Region 2 thus are contributing relatively little to providing real security and, as a result of the static nature of their mission, these units rapidly become stale, develop bad habits, and are ripe for a debacle when the enemy attacks. Many RF still occupy isolated outposts where they protect no one but themselves, and often not even themselves. With even less capability for offensive operations, the PF contribute even less than the RF to overall security. There are 22 platoons in Military Region 2 which have offensive operations missions, while 1,100 have village or hamlet security missions. One cannot criticize the PF on the basis of these figures for the village or hamlet security mission is precisely what the PF platoons were designed to accomplish. However, by conducting their night ambushes (if they conduct them), for example, in the same locations night after night, they allow themselves to become easy targets in this role also. As for day operations, they often become so stereotyped that often they are ambushed disastrously.

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c. The major problem contributing most heavily to the deficiencies already discussed is the lack of effective and energetic leadership. In general, territorial force leaders are not motivated to fight, but are more interested in their personal fortune and survival. They do not set high standards of performance and obviously do not achieve any. Many seem to be afraid to face the enemy even though according to data available through TOC and other reports, when they fight well the RF almost invariably inflict more casualties on the enemy than they suffer. This leadership deficiency is reflected also in the maintenance standards of RF/PF units. During visits by officers of this headquarters, ammunition has been observed carelessly strewn about the compounds, individual rounds of ammunition scattered throughout, weapons neglected, mortar sights not used, all contributing to a compound appearance complimented when described as untidy and disorganized and a performance which is comparable.

d. Certain equipment shortages also adversely affect RF/PF operations. One factor in this regard is that ARVN has priority in equipment issue. A major shortage of long standing is the AN/PRC-25 radio. Each RF company is authorized six and each PF platoon two. At present, Military Region 2 is authorized a total of 6,078 PRC-25's and 99 PRC-10's for RF/PF units. Latest on-hand counts are 3,525 PRC-25's and 2,458 PRC-10's. This would indicate a physical shortage of 194 radios of both types. However, distribution is shockingly uneven. Territorial Forces Evaluation System (TFES) reports show some PF platoons with three radios, many with only one, and 150 with no radios at all. In addition, over 30% of the 410 RF companies in Military Region 2 are short the one 3/4 ton truck authorized by TOE. Actual equipment shortages are compounded by the reluctance of units in most provinces to turn in non-operational equipment for repair. Many units will retain inoperable radios, for example, for the simple reason that they fear they won't get them back if turned in for repair. While there is some basis for this belief, most SM&DSLC's are operating relatively effectively.

e. In general, RF/PF receive good training. However, the long term effect of this training is lost on a unit which suffers frequent combat losses and thus experiences a steady draw on its personnel strength. Seldom is recruitment activity or replacement action sufficient to rebuild unit strength to an effective level. Eventually, many units reach the point of having lost the capability to fight effectively as a platoon or company. These units are supposed to receive refresher-type training, but the system for selecting such units for retraining is weak. Moreover, despite reports to the contrary, the majority of RF/PF units do not conduct the mandatory six

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hours in-place training weekly. This is the result of the generally poor quality of leadership in RF/PF, as well as in many district/province commanders and staff. Lack of motivation in RF/PF is also a major factor. This results from a combination of poor leaders, inadequate pay, bad living conditions, and a feeling that the war will never end. Obviously, under these conditions, the morale of the average RF or PF soldier cannot be very high and it is not.

f. An accurate and honest assessment of the overall effectiveness of RF/PF in Military Region 2 paints a grim picture. On the other hand, there are combat-effective units, particularly RF companies, in every province. Most of these good units are better than the average ARVN infantry company, but there are simply too few of them to carry the fight. Wherever one finds an aggressive province chief he will find combat-capable RF/PF units. Thus leadership is seen to be the single most important weakness. Personnel shortages are seen as the second most significant weakness. RF/PF are purely volunteer forces, recruited for service in specific, limited geographic areas. Pay and allowances are very low. Living conditions for the soldier and his family generally are poor. There is very little sense of nationalism among the South Vietnamese, but a strong sense of family and self interests. All of these factors, combined with the fact that a young man can make an adequate living as a civilian (even live high as a "cowboy"), make recruiting very difficult. Another factor which detracts from the effectiveness of RF, in particular, lies in having so many units committed to static defense. In this role they develop an attitude of simply waiting for the enemy to attack, which he eventually will do at a time and place of his choice. Conversely, it must be kept in the mind that Military Region 2 is a very large area, and that the population not residing in major population centers is generally located along the LOC. The population occupies less than 1/8 of the land area of Military Region 2. This fact forces the provinces to dispose their RF/PF units in lineal fashion, and as a result large areas are left unprotected.

g. The shortage of good leaders and the lack of expertise in large scale operations makes it infeasible to organize RF units larger than battalions. There is not a sufficient reservoir of commanders and staff in ARVN or RF to command and control larger RF units effectively. Moreover, in Military Region 2 RF battalion operations are not yet satisfactory, although a contributing factor is the lack of expertise on the part of the average province chief and his staff.

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6. (S-NF) ROK OPERATIONS:

a. The ROK's spend relatively long periods planning regimental and division sized operations, but the duration of the execution phase is short.

b. The planning which leads to requests for helicopter assets to support airmobile operations is poor. This assessment is based on the fact that the magnitude of their requests for helicopters generally is absurdly high. Without disturbing their tactical plan one iota, their aviation requests always can be scaled down, frequently almost by a factor of one-half. In attempts to resolve this continuing source of friction, we have been completely open with the ROK command group and staff. They know exactly how many helicopters we have of all types; they have been briefed on the method by which this headquarters arrived at its NORMAL DAILY ALLOCATION LEVELS; they understand the need for blade conservation; they know what other forces in the military region are receiving in comparison to themselves; they understand that we will support their operations to the best of our ability, but that at the same time we expect early warning and also that we expect their requests to be honed. Of late I sense that the positive features of this program have begun to take effect, for while the magnitude of the requests remains high, reluctance at paring down has declined.

c. Execution is methodical and thorough, and there is faithful adherence to the plan with little display of the ingenuity or flexibility that must be present to take advantage of tactical situations that may develop. In other words, reaction to tactical opportunities is slow, and this is true not only within their own operations, but also is true (to an even greater degree) when they are asked to react for others.

d. In terms of effort expended, they do not manage as many battalion days in the field as they should, yet they are loath to permit others to operate in their TAOR.

e. In sum, while the preceding tends to be critical, the facts are that results (especially when one considers the relatively short amount of time devoted to fighting) are generally good, and this is what counts in the end.

7. (C) US OPERATIONS:

a. In the past year, unilateral US operations have declined from brigade sized operations (essentially, the 4th Division conducted

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brigade sized operations) to what amount, for all practical purposes, to battalion sized operations.

b. As mentioned earlier, there simply has not been much progress in terms of operations that are truly combined. There have been operations which have the appearance of being combined operations, but in truth US participation in operations of this type generally would be more accurately described as being in support. Illustrative of the point are the recent 173d Airborne Brigade operations in which the 173d supported the CRID operation in BA 226 by establishing an east-west trace in the northern portion of the base area with the mission of interdicting enemy movement out of the base area in that direction.

c. If there is failure in the development of combined operations, there is success in operations to provide combat support to ROK and ARVN forces. In fact, the latter is now seen as the principal US operational role. It is being accomplished very effectively indeed on a daily basis, particularly in terms of aviation and artillery support. In addition, there is US participation in certain bulk logistical assistance.

d. As redeployments continue, the attention of this headquarters will turn more and more toward the security of US personnel and installations. In the process, maximum effort is being made to consolidate to the maximum extent possible, thus reducing simultaneously the number of installations that have to be supported.

e. Finally, it is appropriate to list those policies that have evolved here, and that will continue to guide US operations in Military Region 2.

- (1) Secure US lives and property -- this is a fundamental task.
- (2) Ensure gainful employment for all remaining troops and units. Recommend for standdown those units which fail to measure up against this criterion.
- (3) Reduce US presence and visibility throughout the military region, especially in the highlands and in Qui Nhon.
- (4) Close as many bases, installations, and facilities as possible and do it as quickly as possible (Huzzah for Radcliff).
- (5) Resist return of US combat units to an area once that area has been turned over to ARVN.

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(6) Minimize costs.

(7) Complement ARVN and ROK operations and within capability provide combat support to these operations.

8. (C) LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS:

This section on logistical operations begins with a discussion of a general nature followed by a specific status assessment by logistical function. VNAF logistical support for helicopters is addressed as a separate item under the maintenance function.

a. General:

(1) Logistical planning has shifted emphasis from combat service support of US forces to coordination of US support for RVNAF operations. Redeployment planning and planning for the orderly and timely disposition of facilities has increased significantly. In June 1970, redeployment planning was at a low level and disposition of facilities consisted of three completed actions and two in progress. Since that time, 36 installations have been turned over to RVNAF and 32 are in the process of being turned over. Although, most of the redeployments were completed during this period, extensive planning for redeployment continues. In addition, support for the advisory effort has become more of a problem due to reduced stockages at depots and a drawdown of all types of transportation.

(2) ARVN continues to exhibit the capability to provide organizational and direct support maintenance that is comparable to US maintenance. Repair parts zero balance has not been a significant deadline factor. ARVN has the logistic capability to transport whatever supplies and equipment are required. In the recent action around Fire Support Base 6, significant supplies and equipment were moved by the ALC in an acceptable manner.

b. Supply:

(1) US: Since September 1970, the US supply situation is that supplies are available but in limited quantities. From another point of view, however, the drawdown of combat service support units and depots continues to place significant stresses and strains on the systems. These stresses and strains are illustrated by lost requisitions, delays, and frequent shortages on high demand items. Thus, the only effective method to move supplies and equipment has been through strong command action, high priority requisitions, and the use of combat emergency

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procedures. In sum, with a few notable exceptions (i.e., POL equipment) supplies generally are adequate and should remain so. On the other hand, they may not be in the best location (i.e., Long Binh Depot rather than Pleiku, An Khe, and Qui Nhon).

(2) ARVN: The past seven months have been a profitable period for ARVN, with an extensive Improvement and Modernization Program in effect throughout USARV. Considerable quantities of vehicles, weapons, generators, and aircraft have been transferred along with PLL's to ARVN units. In addition, the ALC's steadily have been increasing their stockage and general supply capabilities. Training of personnel has improved significantly in both class III and V areas with a slightly slower program (but one which is becoming increasingly effective) in the training of ARVN Mobile Advisory Logistics Teams (MALT).

c. Transportation:

(1) US: Transportation systems remain reasonably responsive, yet elimination of depot stocks at Qui Nhon and subsequent reliance upon sealift for movement of supplies and equipment from depot stocks at Cam Ranh Bay has increased significantly the delivery time to customers in northern Military Region 2. In addition, capability to sustain support for large scale operations is somewhat diminished. As the US withdrawal continues, scheduled air service is being reduced both in points serviced and frequency of service. This is entirely appropriate. Surface transportation is being withdrawn at a somewhat slower rate. What is important with respect to the latter is that the speed with which truck and terminal units are withdrawn from support commands be closely tied to retrograde movement requirements.

(2) ARVN: With the exception of bulk POL capability, the ARVN surface transportation system appears to meet ARVN requirements. However, the RVNAF air support system is slow, primarily because of the high level at which the system is managed (JGS). Until such time as VNAF has sufficient capability of its own, dependence on US for air resupply support will remain high.

d. Maintenance:

(1) US: Maintenance in Military Region 2 has been greatly affected in the past six months by the constant changing of support units. Because of this turmoil, using units have had many requisitions for repair parts cancelled requiring constant resubmission of requisitions and all the frustration that involves. One result has been that units in Military Region 2 have a very high zero balance on PLL. In

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addition, many of the units themselves have moved and this movement also has affected the maintenance posture in Military Region 2.

(2) VNAF Logistical Support for Aircraft:

(a) VNAF logistic support for aircraft is based on a package concept. VNAF crewmen are trained to arm and refuel their aircraft and to repair their weapons, but are not trained to operate POL pumps. VNAF support maintenance for aircraft peculiar equipment is provided by a VNAF support wing. When aircraft are sent from home station for an operation, support maintenance personnel are sent along as required. ARVN has the responsibility to support VNAF motor vehicles. This is accomplished by area support units.

(b) When VNAF aircraft are assigned to support an ARVN operation, VNAF sends an aircraft support package along to support the allocated aircraft. The ARVN command in charge of the operation provides rations, lodging, and security. ARVN (II and V ALC's) has the responsibility to provide ammunition and POL for aircraft rearm/refuel points.

(c) VNAF supply and maintenance support is adequate. Maintenance personnel are trained and capable of getting the job done. The repair parts supply system is adequate, however, the system is not responsive to immediate demands.

9. (S-NF) ADVISORY/LIAISON EFFORT:

a. An obvious fault in our advisory effort resides in the area of experience and rank equivalency. ARVN commanders often have been in command for years, and therefore obviously have been in combat for years. These commanders persist, and in the process see advisors come and go. Most advisors have less experience than the typical ARVN commander being advised. Most, if not all, are junior to him. Finally, that ARVN commander has heard it all before.

Said in another way, the advisory effort presently is being conducted at corps, division, regiment, and to some extent at the battalion level. Advice is seldom requested; when given, it generally is accepted with courtesy but prompts

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little action. There is, however, a noticeable departure from this norm when in operational difficulty as recently was the case in the Plei Trap, at Phu Nhon, and at Firebase 6. It is anticipated that this pliancy will be of relatively short duration and that as the memory of the heavy combat action (and the danger and uncertainty associated with it) subsides, the previously described attitude of indifference to and non-acceptance of advice will return.

And so, at least with respect to the ARVN, I question whether there is much meaningful passage of advice from advisor to advised. My experience here in Military Region 2 indicates to me that at this stage of the war, the field advisor plays only two important and useful roles. These are as a support coordinator and as a source of information. In the former role, he has his counterpart's full attention. ARVN commanders look to their US advisor as a source of combat support, and in this role the advisor clearly is needed. He is the means by which support can be obtained -- support in the form of artillery, gunships, aviation, TAC air, and B-52 strikes. Moreover, it is a means by which the advisor can influence decisions. Obviously, in allocating assets, a measure of control over operations is obtained, and a certain amount of advisory leverage too, but this situation does not fit the description of the advisory effort as it currently is supposed to exist.

As a source of information, the advisor also plays an important role. It is only natural that the US commander providing combat support assets will want to know how and where and for what purpose those assets are being used. Moreover, as senior advisor, I have found it extremely useful (no, more than extremely useful -- essential) to have an independent, non-ARVN assessment of what is going on. The US advisor on the ground fills both of these roles, and for these reasons retention of advisors in some form and in some degree surely is appropriate.

Clearly, however, there are too many advisors in too many places, therefore they spend entirely too much time taking care of themselves. To illustrate the point, a large percentage of the division and corps advisory strength now supports advisors rather than ARVN. These circumstances will become critical as USARV continues to drawdown and the

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system that now is capable of supporting advisory teams from hell to breakfast no longer is present.

An advisor fault that I have observed again and again is the tendency to get involved in operations as doers rather than as advisors. In my view, when this happens, we take a step backwards. It is a sure way to stifle initiative and acceptance of responsibility on the part of those being advised. What is important, and what must be kept uppermost in the minds of all advisors (and particularly logistics advisors) is that the ARVN system must be exercised if it is to grow and improve. This is absolutely essential and must be stressed constantly throughout the system.

From another point of view (and what I am about to state may well be more the fault of the example set by US units than by any action or influence on the part of advisors), Americans have spoiled ARVN to a fare-thee-well. ARVN commanders have bad habits which were taught in one way or another and which they are not easily going to shed. They are dependent on capabilities which they won't have in the future in the degree which they now have. The prime example of this, of course, is their reliance on gunships and TAC air rather than to use properly their artillery or own organic indirect fire capabilities. This reliance on the plush support levels of the past is, at some time in the future, going to hurt. How the ARVN will adjust and how quickly they will do it I am not sure, but do it they must, and hence this requirement also must be uppermost in the minds of US officers throughout all levels of the advisory system.

A word on advisors themselves. Clearly, the strong efforts by DA to improve the quality of advisors has been effective. There has been significant improvement in qualification too, and I have noted across the board an improved capability to view tasks from a practical point of view. The quality of District Senior Advisors seems to improve with each new one who reports. If only such were true for District Chiefs.

Finally, and in spite of the preceding paragraph, when all of this is put together, I conclude that the current phase-out of the BCAT's and RCAT's (and MAT's for

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the Territorial Forces) is a step in the right direction, and that the only fault with this program may be that it is too slow. A review of ROK operations and the US support of these operations indicates that the US liaison structure with the ROK's is effective. The total US liaison strength for the two ROK divisions and the ROK-FC is 23, while the US advisory strength for the two ARVN divisions and the corps headquarters is 568. (A large percentage of the division and corps advisory strength now supports the advisors rather than the ARVN.) After many years in the advisory business, we are now actually providing assistance, liaison and support for ARVN. It seems logical then, that we should give serious consideration to phasing down to a liaison structure similar in nature to that now in existence with the ROK forces. This would be a particularly appropriate approach with respect to the ARVN. The sooner they have total responsibility, the better off they will be, the better job they will do, and the better off we will be in terms of force reductions. Territorial forces, on the other hand, are a different matter. The reduction in MAT's is appropriate, however the successful implementation of the Vietnamese MTT program is critical and there will remain a need for advisor assistance to the Territorial Forces at the District Headquarters level.

10. (S) OPERATIONAL PLANNING BY HEADQUARTERS, SRAC:

a. The purpose of this paragraph is to reiterate views expressed previously concerning operational planning, in particular that planning required of this headquarters in response to MACV seasonal campaign plans.

b. Currently, the MACV procedure is to prepare and distribute seasonal campaign plans for execution by the various regional headquarters. The seasonal aspect is related to the four seasons of a year in New York State, and while this may be a logical process in some military regions, it is not in Military Region 2. What is seasonal in Military Region 2 evolves from the southwestern and the northeastern monsoons. These monsoons divide Military Region 2 into an eastern and a western portion in which, for much of the year, if the weather is consistently bad in one area it is consistently good

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in the other (and vice versa). Clearly, the weather situation in Military Region 2 plays a major role in operations and must be taken into account in operational planning. In fact, in this Military Region it constitutes the basic point of departure from which all operational planning must proceed. This fundamental factor should be reflected in MACV seasonal planning pertaining to this military region--the span of MACV Campaign Plans, as they relate to this military region, should be closely related to the monsoon seasons that influence so much in the highlands. Recommend future seasonal plans, if indeed it is essential to publish them, be divided as follows: January-April; May-August; September-December.

c. What I have stated in the preceding paragraph, however, pertains only if MACV does in fact continue to prepare and publish seasonal operational plans. For several reasons I believe that MACV should give serious consideration to preparing no more campaign plans at all.

What happens when a MACV plan comes down is that this headquarters prepares an implementing plan. This implementing plan, which is directive to US forces, must include other major forces in the area. To ignore them would be to prepare a plan that would not only be unrealistic, but also unsatisfactory. Hence the plans we prepare do take into account the forces of all three nations, and do so by incorporating (in the case of the ROK's) pertinent portions of their own OPLAN under friendly forces.

With respect to US forces, the plan commits US maneuver elements, but assigns to them relatively few enemy targets. This is in keeping with the fact that we have only one truly independent maneuver element (the other two, the 1/10 Cav and the 1/22 Inf, are tied to fixed security missions); also with the fact that the US role, as has been stressed previously, is progressively emphasizing combat support.

As for ARVN and territorial forces, the plan can be directive only to the Deputy Senior Advisor and to the DEPCORDS as advisors. The SRAC plan provides directive guidance concerning advice to be given to counterparts concerning objectives for combat operations, hopefully to influence operational decisions made by senior ARVN commanders as well as province and district chiefs.

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But this is only a marginally satisfactory way to operate. Prior to publishing our winter-spring plan, we briefed it to Major General Dzu with the objective of having him take it and use it as a point of departure in developing an ARVN plan for operations in II Corps. Our view was that a plan prepared by the Vietnamese was essential. Since the majority of forces in the military region are Vietnamese, since US ground strength has diminished, because the US role is becoming progressively more oriented to combat support, and finally, because the ROK's should work more closely with and be more responsive to the ARVN, II Corps, Commander, ARVN, II Corps, should take the lead in developing regional operational plans. Unfortunately, it soon became clear that ARVN, II Corps, did not intend to publish a plan, hence, as the next best thing, we published our plan ourselves for use as described earlier. That a corps headquarters in the process of fighting a war would fail to have a basic operational plan is incredible to me. It should not be permitted! On the other hand, it is clear that the corps commander and his staff are not going to be motivated by US advisors to prepare one. This motivation is going to have to be provided by JGS, and it must be provided soon. The military effort in Military Region 2 must be coordinated and integrated far more than is now the case. As mentioned earlier, there must be increased cooperation and common purpose between the ARVN and the territorial forces and all the other Vietnamese capabilities that are now out doing their thing in a vacuum. In other words, there is an urgent need for a plan, a Vietnamese plan, a plan that is simple, sets realistic goals, and most important of all, a plan that is monitored and thus ensures compliance. In sum, if Vietnamization is our goal, then the time for Vietnamization of future operational planning is an important part of that goal. It must be started without delay. JGS rather than MACV should take the lead, and in the process, ARVN Corps Headquarters will be required to respond and prepare implementing plans. This is simply another way of exercising the ARVN system, an objective that must be pursued in all fields.

11. (S) IMPROVING THE OPERATIONS OF THE BORDER RANGER BATTALIONS:

a. At the moment, there are twelve border ranger battalions. They constitute, at least in the mind of Major General Dzu, a corps covering force which I consider appropriate.

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Their purpose should be to provide early warning of enemy movement into Vietnam from the border sanctuaries of Cambodia and Laos. For a variety of reasons, the forces currently committed are singularly unsuccessful in accomplishing this objective. The first of these is that the patrols do not venture beyond the range fan of their camp's 105mm howitzer platoons. Since the border camps are, on average, at least 30 or more kilometers apart, obviously there is an uncovered gap of ten or more kilometers between each set of camps. It is through just such a gap that 95B was able to move undetected from Cambodia to the Phu Nhon District Headquarters in April.

Unfortunately, within the ten kilometer range fan, coverage is not much better. The border battalions operate on the basis of one-third defending the camp, one-third operating in the mid-range (say out to five kilometers) and one-third out to the limit of the 105mm howitzer range fan. This system is ineffective. In the first place, the mid range patrols do not venture any five kilometers out from the camps. As for the longer range patrols, they also are equally ineffective. Limited by the amount of food, water, and ammunition they can carry (and minus any organic indirect fire capability of any kind), these patrols spend their time walking to their objective area and returning. There is very little time for searching, listening, or observing. These patrols currently cover a swath 18" wide out and back. Finally, each border ranger camp has an AO. Considering the forces available to cover the area assigned, these AO's are ridiculously large with a total result that the entire corps covering force operation is a farce. The entire operation is amateurish in concept and perfunctory in execution. The assets provided to support mission accomplishment are minimal both in terms of fire support and mobility. In sum, there is no mission accomplishment. Perhaps the only current value of these camps is that they serve as objectives upon which the enemy border regiments can launch their annual spring attacks. In the process, the enemy must mass his forces and thus year after year he accepts heavy losses from the firepower available to ARVN. We would not want to do anything to disturb this pattern!

On the other hand, much can be done to improve this corps covering operation, and to this end appropriate planning currently is underway at this headquarters. The concept is simple. Provide additional mobility and increase the efficiency of ground force maneuver. Here is what we have in mind (Refer to the schematic at Inclosure 1).

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First off, given the meager maneuver force strength of the camps, it is obvious that the forces available must be concentrated along a trace generally close to the shortest distance between any two camps. Hence the areas in which foot patrols would operate are within the football shaped areas drawn in between each of the camps. Newly committed helicopter lift capability would be assigned to the Border Ranger Command, and this lift capability would be used to insert patrols into the cross hatched areas between the 105 range fans. Given this lift capability, these patrols can take mortars along (which they never do at present) and thus have the fire support necessary to operate outside the 105 fans. On occasion, the 105's themselves could be moved. With helicopter insertion, patrols placed on the ground would have the capability of remaining in the area for the full seven day period now required to move from a given camp out to the 105 range fan and return. Moreover, the gap formerly offered up free to the enemy now will have a measure of surveillance.

The system I have described would be placed into effect along the entire north-south trace of the border camps. To preclude an excessive commitment of lift helicopters and gunships, insertions and extractions along the entire trace would be planned and controlled by the border ranger command. With good planning, the total daily helicopter commitment need not be particularly great.

With respect to the AO's assigned each border camp, the size (as stated earlier) is much too large for the forces available. What the corps commander needs to know is when major forces are infiltrating into Military Region 2 between the camps. Thus the large areas west of the line of camps should be covered by some other means. In the schematic, the area referred to is the hatched area west of B'B'. Our concept visualizes this reconnaissance zone being covered by air cavalry, with reaction forces designated in advance by the border ranger command (or conceivably from within the three mobile ranger battalion capability of the II Corps Ranger Group).

In the near future, this concept will be presented to Major General Dzu, and from that point forward the detailed planning required will be a Vietnamese responsibility. What we would hope to see forthcoming in short order would be

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detailed plans and specific requirements. Of course, it is through the latter that we will be able to influence the plan, and through the pilots involved we will be able to monitor at least part of the execution.

12. (S) SUMMARY:

Out of all that has gone before, let me select a point or two for emphasis.

a. The ARVN have a great many shortfalls, there is no denying that. But overall, there has been progress in Military Region 2, progress that can be observed and therefore is measurable. This is important! But it is just as important, perhaps moreso, to consider the possibility that the victory at Firebase 6 induced significant intangible improvements in self-confidence and spirit. If this is the case, and there is every reason to believe it is, then this could have very positive implications for the future.

b. In the interest of Vietnamization and of developing coordinated operations throughout Military Region 2, the moving force in planning should come from JGS to II Corps rather than from MACV to Headquarters, SRAC.

c. Of the many areas in Military Region 2 in need of improvement, territorial forces are the leading candidate. In my view, improvement in these forces has considerable leverage, and thus for a small increment of improvement in the force, there will be a considerably greater improvement in results.

d. The advisory role is changing. We may as well recognize that the advisory side of the job is declining while the support coordinator and liaison aspects of the task are taking on increasing importance. This fact may well have implications for the manner in which the advisory effort is organized and the manner in which advisor personnel resources are trained and distributed.

e. All must understand this point--that to perform a task for the ARVN that its commanders or staffs should be doing for themselves is a step backwards. This constraint must be observed by all US personnel, advisors in particular.

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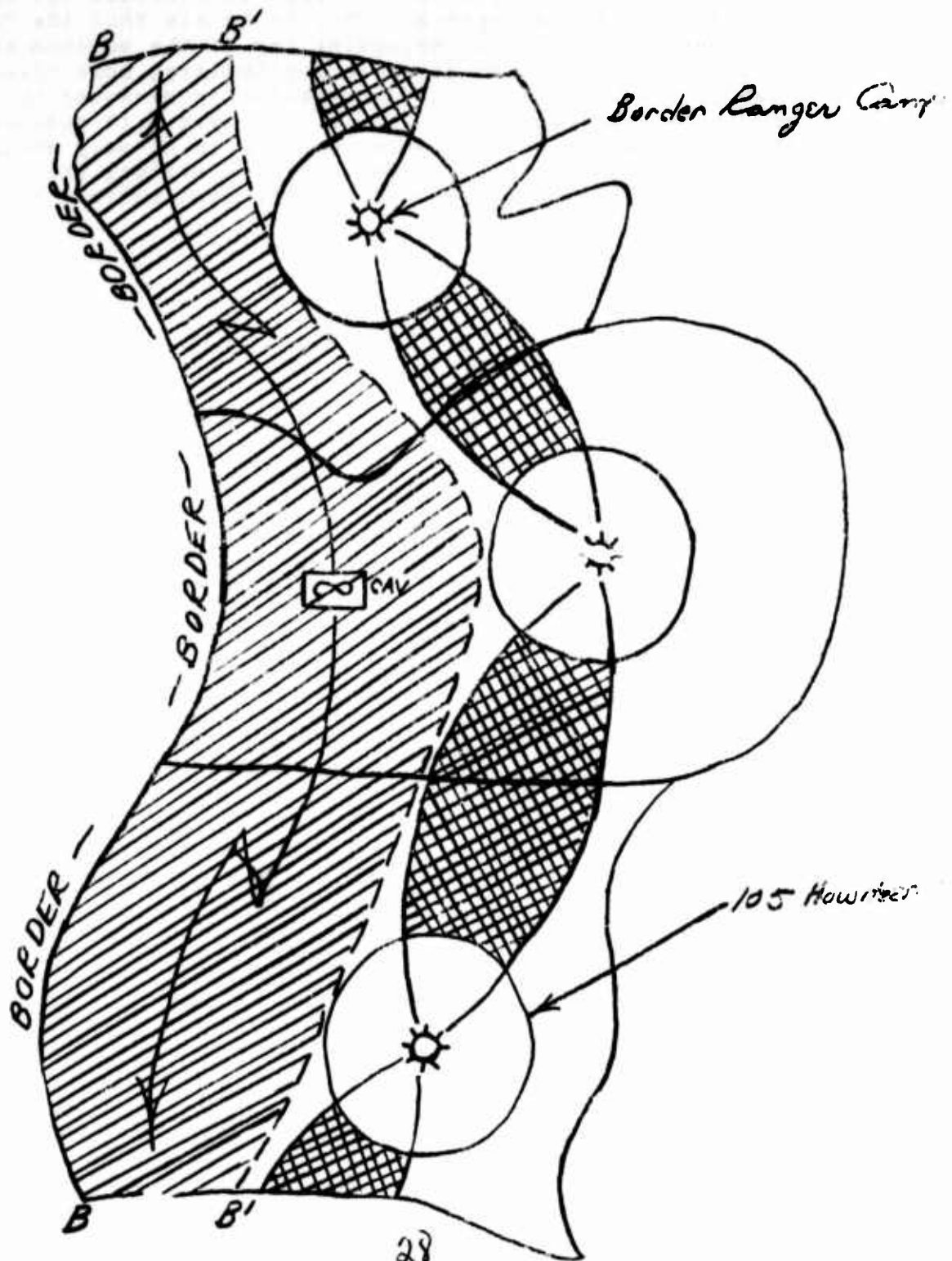
It is imperative that ARVN is forced to exercise its system--all aspects of that system. This is to say that the Vietnamese must be given the responsibility to the maximum extent possible. When one is given responsibility, more often than not he strives harder and eventually measures up. But as long as the responsibility is to remain with someone else, there is a not inconsiderable tendency to do only enough to get by. This is simply human nature in action, and it pertains equally to armed forces or, for that matter, to nations.

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Inclosure 1 (Sketch Map) to Letter, HQ SRAC, 14 May 71, Subject: Assessment of Conditions in MR 2 as of 31 May 1971



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UNCLASSIFIED

Security Classification

SECRET

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY (Corporate author)		2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	
HQ, OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310		SECRET NOFORN	
3. REPORT TITLE		2b. GROUP	
Senior Officer Debriefing Report: MG Charles P. Brown		4	
4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (Type of report and inclusive dates)			
Senior Officer Debriefing Report, 31 March 70 thru 15 May 1971.			
5. AUTHOR(S) (First name, middle initial, last name)			
MG Charles P. Brown			
6. REPORT DATE		7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES	7b. NO. OF REFS
14 May 1971		33	
8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO.		9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
b. PROJECT NO.		71B028	
c. N/A		9b. OTHER REPORT NO(S) (Any other numbers that may be assigned this report)	
d.			
10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT			
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY	
N/A		OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310	
13. ABSTRACT			

SECRET

DD FORM 1473
1 NOV 65

UNCLASSIFIED

Security Classification

(This page is unclassified)

SUPPLEMENTARY

INFORMATION



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OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
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DAAG-PAP (M) (4 Oct 71)DAFD-OTT 71B028

13 October 1971

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CG, I Field Force Vietnam, CG, Second Regional Assistance
Command, Period 31 March 1970 thru 15 May 1971 (U)

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